

# CONTRAST AND CONTRASTIVENESS IN STRUCTURAL PARALLELISM

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- 3 Methodology
- 4 Pragmatic Contrast
- 5 Contrastive prosody
  - Brief overview: intonation and contrastive accents
  - Contrast-marking in complex parallelism
- 6 Conclusion

## Parallel structures:

- prototypical instances of Contrast (cf. Repp, 2010)
- two (or more) assertions contrasted at
  - one position → simple parallelism
    - (1) Richard bought [tofu]<sub>contrast</sub>, but he also bought [beans]<sub>contrast</sub>.
  - two positions → complex parallelism
    - (2) [Richard]<sub>contr.1</sub> bought [tofu]<sub>contr.2</sub> and [Frank]<sub>contr.1</sub> (bought) [beans]<sub>contr.2</sub>.

Immediate context gives rise to semantic **alternativeness**

## Two perspectives on Contrast:

- alternativeness (e.g. Chafe, 1976)
- discourse relations (e.g. Asher & Lascarides, 2003; Mann & Thompson, 1988)

## Repp's (2016) taxonomy:

- SIMILAR: “[T]he proposition associated with  $d_1$  and the proposition associated with  $d_2$  can both be true in the evaluation world;  $d_1$  and  $d_2$  make the same kind of contribution to the current question under discussion”

(3) John was mowing the lawn. Pete was too.

(Repp, 2016, p. 277)

$d_{1/2}$  = *discourse segments*

- OPPOSE: “[T]he proposition associated with  $d_1$  and the proposition associated with  $d_2$  can both be true in the evaluation world;  $d_1$  and  $d_2$  make opposing contributions to the current question under discussion”

(4) John was mowing the lawn, but Pete was pruning the roses. (Repp, 2016, p. 277)

- CORRECTION: “ $d_1$  rejects  $d_2$  because certain background assumptions for the felicitous use of  $d_1$  are not met, or because the propositions associated with  $d_1$  and  $d_2$  cannot both be true in the evaluation world”

(5) **THE ROLE OF CONTRAST IN GRAMMAR** (adapted; Repp, 2016, p. 279)

- a. A constituent that is a candidate for being a contrastive constituent is marked differently from non-contrastive constituents [. . .]. The constituent is marked by the same means for all discourse relations.

*= contrast based on type of alternatives<sup>1</sup>*

- b. The constituents that are candidates for being contrastive constituents in all types of alternatives are marked differently when they occur in OPPOSE or CORR in comparison to when they occur in other discourse relations.

*= contrast based on discourse relations*

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<sup>1</sup>explicit alternatives, explicit alternative set, implicit alternative set

- RQ1: What is the role of discourse relations in an analysis of structural parallelism in English? Is Contrast, if formally-marked, based on alternativeness or discourse relations?
- RQ2: Does a prosodic reflex of Contrast exist in English? If so, which pitch accent is used for this purpose and how systematic is this relationship?

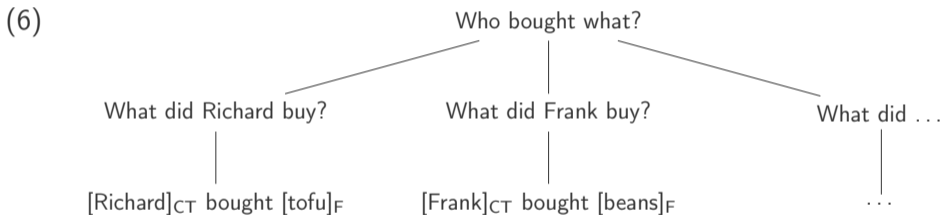
## Data collection:

- focus on both simple and complex parallelism
  - 46 instances of simple parallelism
  - 23 instances of complex parallelism
- data extracted from ICE-GB (Nelson et al., 2002)
  - covers wide variety of genres (private conversations, interviews, etc.)
  - discourse context and audio files collected
- utterances analysed
  - pragmatically (information structure/discourse relations) using QUDs (Brunetti, 2024; Repp, 2016; Riester et al., 2018)
  - prosodically in ToBI (e.g. Silverman et al., 1992)

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**Complex parallelism:** characterised by question/subquestion strategy (cf. Büring, 2003)



- always assumed to involve a contrastive Topic-Focus (CT-F) partitioning
- CTs frequently associated with particular prosodic contour (B-accent)

## SIMILAR:

(7) They say that [Michael Heseltine]<sub>?CT</sub> has [charisma]<sub>Foc</sub>. [Douglas Hurd]<sub>?CT</sub> has [a safe pair of hands]<sub>Foc</sub>.

[S1B-043 #001]

- in principle, contrastive interpretation possible (*but* can be inserted)
- larger discourse context suggests otherwise
  - interviewer lists qualities of two political opponents
  - asks interviewee what he wants others to say about him

**Non-contrastive speaker meaning most likely interpretation**

## OPPOSE:

- (8) A: [...] when nature is left full play as on Salisbury Plain and the firing ranges down at Lulworth in Dorset you've got the most superb primeval landscape [...]  
B: Well certainly [some hedgerows]<sub>CT</sub> are [very old indeed]<sub>Foc</sub>, but [an awful lot of hedgerows]<sub>CT</sub> were [created in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries]<sub>Foc</sub>.

[S1B-037 #048]

- violation of expectation (hence Contrast) present
  - underlying assumption: nature flourishes without human intervention
  - dismissed in the second discourse segment of speaker B's turn
- more generally: Contrast *optional* feature of complex parallelism → no universal CT-F partitioning

## A fourth discourse relation:

- (9) So [a group of Jews]<sub>CT</sub> say the only way we can protect Judaism is [to withdraw]<sub>Foc</sub>. [Another group of Jews]<sub>CT</sub> say the only way we can sustain Jewish identity is [to redefine its terms]<sub>Foc</sub>.
- examples like this do not neatly fall into three-way distinction proposed by Repp (2016)
  - contradiction expressed by two (strictly-speaking incompatible) discourse segments
    - here: two diametrically opposed viewpoints predicated of two groups of Jews
    - contradiction not semantic, but pragmatic, i.e. rooted in the speaker's choice to present the discourse segments as incompatible
  - instance of what I call CONTRAST (Mann & Thompson, 1988, p. 278)

<b>Discourse relation</b>	<b>#</b>
SIMILAR	15
OPPOSE	6
CONTRAST	2
CORRECTION	0

Table 1: Distribution of discourse relations

- distribution as expected
- higher degree of contrastiveness, the lower the frequency (cf. Brunetti, 2024, on French/Italian)

intonation = string of sequentially ordered local pitch events (H and L)

**A- / B-accent distinction:** (cf. Jackendoff, 1972)

- A-accent ( $H^* L-L\%$ ) → Focus accent
- B-accent ( $L+H^* L-H\%$ ) → (Contrastive) Topic accent (i.a. Büring, 2003; Pierrehumbert & Hirschberg, 1990; Steedman, 2000)

**L+H\* as a Contrast-marker?:** problematic (cf. Hedberg & Sosa, 2007)

- L+H\* has two main functions (cf. Arvaniti et al., 2022; Ladd, 2008; Orrico et al., 2025)
  - marking of Contrast
  - marking of Emphasis (emphatic  $H^* \sim L+H^*$  continuum)

## CT position:

- CTs should always be B-accented (cf. Büring, 2003)
  - consistent CT-marking (L+(!)H\*) in prosody expected
  - results indicate relevance of discourse relations

Relation	o	(!)H*	L*	L+(!)H*	L*+H	Total
SIM	0	16	1	15	1	33
OPP	1	7	0	3	0	11
CONTR	0	0	0	3	1	4
<b>Total</b>	1	23	2	20	2	<b>48</b>

Table 2: Pitch accents found on the instantiation of the initial variable (CT)

## SIMILAR:

(10)

L+H\*

L+H\*

They say that [Michael HESELTINE] has charisma. [Douglas HURD] has a safe pair of hands.

## Meaning of L+H\* in SIMILAR:

- parallel structure *not* contrastive (i.e. no CT)
- L+H\* consequently non-contrastive (but contrastiveness inference possible)
- L+H\* marks Emphasis rather than Contrast



**CONTRAST:**

(12) **L+H\***

So [a GROUP of Jews] say the only way we can protect Judaism is to withdraw.

**L+H\***

[ANOTHER group of Jews] say the only way we can sustain Jewish identity is to redefine its terms.

**Meaning of L+H\* in CONTRAST:**

- CONTRAST pragmatically contrastive, i.e. CTs present
- tentative evidence for systematic marking → L+H\* marks Contrast

## Basic argument:

- not all (complex) parallel structures pragmatically contrastive; no consistent CT-marking
- discourse relations relevant (cf. Brunetti, 2024; Repp, 2016)
  - SIMILAR: non-contrastive, i.e. no CT-marking
    - both H\*/L+H\* mark different degrees of Emphasis
    - intuitive contrastiveness inferential (i.e. addressee-bound interpretative effect)
  - OPPOSE: pragmatically contrastive
    - no systematic prosodic marking though (mismatch!)
    - H\*/L+H\* therefore likely related to Emphasis
  - CONTRAST: always contrastive
    - L+H\* always marks CT rather than emphasis
    - contrastiveness implicational (i.e. speaker-bound implicature)

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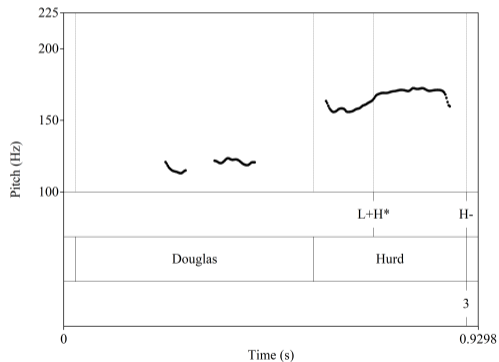
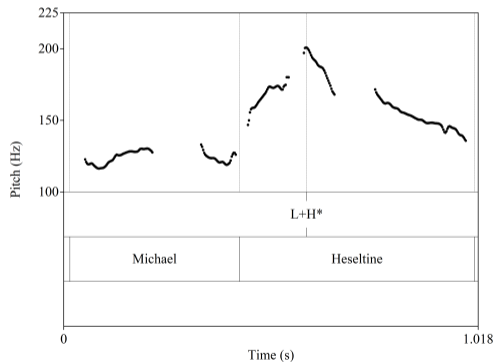
Relation	o	(!)H*	L*	L+(!)H*
SIMILAR	1	24	3	7
OPPOSITE	0	4	1	6
CONTRAST	0	4	1	0

Table 3: Distribution of accents on Focus values

### Pitch accenting on Focus values:

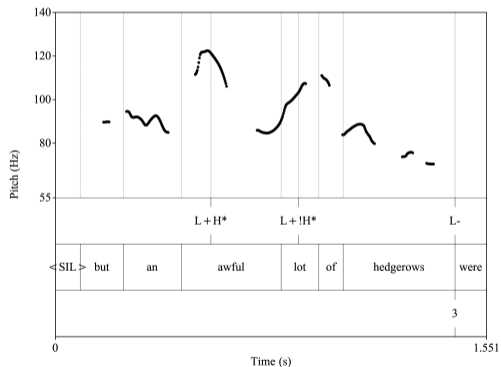
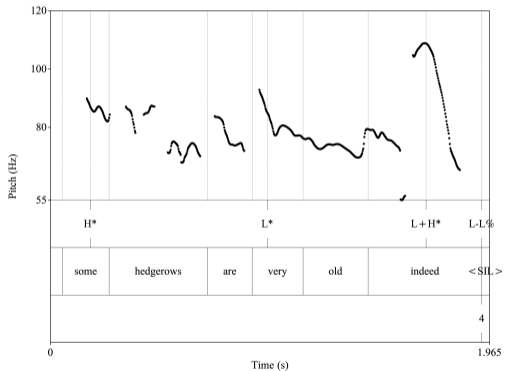
- large majority of Foci realised with (!)H\*
- suggests limited role of Contrast on this position
- L+(!)H\* marks Emphasis

## SIMILAR:



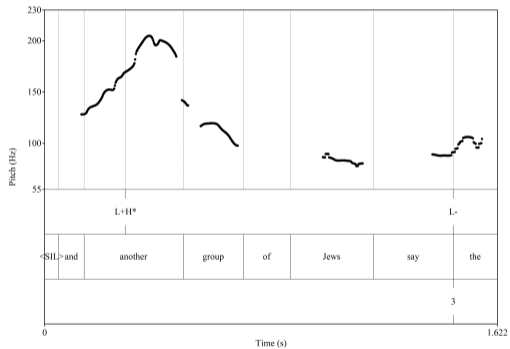
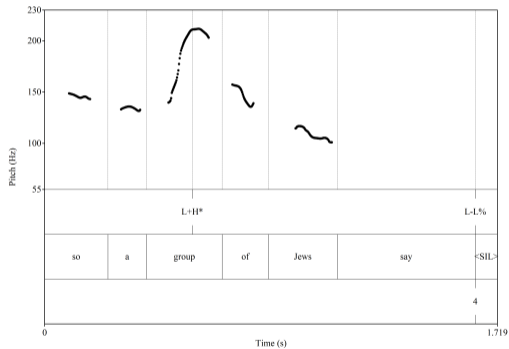
Play

## OPPOSE:



Play

## CONTRAST:



Play